

Commentary: An Adventure In Spoon Feeding Bass

BY BABE WINKELMAN

When I lipped the 5-pound largemouth, I couldn't resist. I looked up at my friend Jerry and with a twinkle in my eye I said "are you sure you're not ready to switch?" Jerry just shook his head. He couldn't bring himself to admit what he knew he should do.

Let me hit rewind on this story for a second.

Jerry and I were fishing a favorite lake for largemouth bass. The weather pattern had been consistent, and recent bites had been on the weedline — served up with soft plastics on jigworms (wacky rigs) or Texas rigged. So naturally, we began picking apart some proven cabbage beds for bass. Nothing, I mean, not a bite. "Maybe they moved up into the slop," we discussed. Nope. Weedless plastics, frogs, rats and spinnerbaits produced only a couple of 11-inch fish. It's no fun skipping those across the surface. So we moved out into the main lake basin and scratched our heads. "They've gotta be deep," we agreed.

After some extensive scouting with the sonar, we located some fish on a deep, expansive mid-lake flat. You can't always identify a species by the way they show up on the graph, but all indications were that they were bass — based on the way they were scattered within the bottom five feet of the water column. Walleyes would typically be hugging bottom mid-day, and crappies would have been more suspended. So it was worth a try to verify that we had found bass.

The fish were down about 25 feet, so our first logical tactic was to jig for them. We each tied on a totally different jig. Me with a grape-colored grub tail jig; and Jerry with a chartreuse hair jig. When trying to dial in a particular bite with a buddy, it's always a good idea to each use different presentations. If one pops and the other doesn't, it speeds up the process of figuring out the fish and their flavor of the day.

Jerry was on the board first, with a 2-pounder. But after an additional half hour of casting, nothing bit. At that point I deduced that chartreuse might be the color, but jigs weren't doing it. So I tied on a firetiger-pattern spoon to see what that would do. "Uh, Babe, we're not chasing pike here," Jerry said.

Not surprising. Because when most people think about spoons, they think about throwing big

daredevils for Canadian shield northern pike. Or they equate spoons with downriggers and Great Lakes salmon, trout and steelhead.

But few anglers immediately think about spoons for bass. They should.

Think about it — a spoon has a big, natural baitfish profile, tons of flash and a good thumpy wobble that throws off a lot of vibration. Why WOULDN'T spoons be dynamite on bass? The truth is, they are. I've caught tons (probably literally) of bass on spoons, particularly in conditions when the bass had roamed from vegetation to main lake structures. In those circumstances, there's no worry about the spoon's treble hook getting hung up in cover.

Other advantages to spoon fishing include long casting and versatility. Spoon cast forever, because of their weight and inherent aerodynamics. In windy conditions that stops a crankbait or spinnerbait in mid-flight, a spoon slices right through the gusts. And when you're fishing big flats with scattered fish, like Jerry and I were, long casts are crucial when trying to cover a lot of water.

As for versatility, spoons can be fished at any depth and at virtually any speed. You can skip them on top; bulge them just beneath the surface; wobble them at any depth within the water column; let them tick bottom; or even fish them vertically. A spoon is quite literally the world's most do-all lure.

Anyway, after Jerry finished criticizing my bait selection, I made a football-field-length cast and let the spoon settle to the bottom. Then I gave it a "snap-jig" movement followed by about 10 feet of retrieve; then a flutter back to the bottom; followed immediately by another SNAP. On the fourth snap in this sequence, a fat 4+ pounder pounced on the spoon. Jerry shook his head. "Fluke," is the word he used I think.

After a half dozen more fish had fallen to my crazy notion of using a spoon for bass, Jerry was muttering a different word that began with an 'F'. When I boated that five-pound beast I mentioned at the beginning of this column, Jerry finally swallowed his pride and asked "do you have another one of them spoons?"

"Nope," I said. "It's my only one."

Jerry didn't know it then, but he'll find out now. I had four spoons just like that one in my box. Sorry Jer.

OF THE OUTDOORS: Avoiding Invasive Species

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

The water in our area and in much of in the United States is in danger of being invaded. These invaders aren't armed, don't have the high tech weapons that the U.S. does, yet, they're coming into the country. These invaders are aquatic invasive non-native aquatic plants and animals, which compete with some of our native species, creating problems for recreation boating, while causing damage to our economy and our natural resources.

Invasive species are plants or animals that can be native to our area or non-native, like those coming in from other regions or other countries. Invasive species have the ability to dominate and change our river and lake systems. Many of these exotic species came to the U.S. in ballast water or were released from aquariums. The spread of these invasive species often happens by being spread from one body of water when vegetation remains on boat trailers, props, fishing gear or by larvae or adults attached to or in bait buckets, and live wells.

Some, like Eurasian watermilfoil grow quickly, developing thick vegetative mats restricting or preventing boating and fishing.

Then there's the Asian Carp, which includes the Bighead, Silver Carp and Large-scale Silver Carp. The Silver or Flying Carp are those that go airborne when startled, they can grow to over 40 pounds. They were imported to North America in the 70s to help control algae growth in aquaculture. All three of these species are filter species; which compete with Paddlefish, Gizzard Shad and most species of juvenile fish.

Controlling these fish is almost impossible



Gary HOWEY

What's New For The Outdoorsmen?

Nothing is worse then getting to your fishing hot spot and grabbing your rod, only to find out they're all tangled up or worse yet, imbedded in your boat carpet.

A Nebraska based company has come up with the solution to solving this problem. The folks at Crankbait Cover-Ups know what they're talking about when it comes to fishing as they've been fishing all their life. Their high quality bait cover-ups attach around the rod and over your bait, not only keeping your hooks from snagging you, other rods and boat carpet, but for the tournament fishermen, they also keep your bait hidden, so others won't know what bait you're throwing.

They've enlisted the help of two well-known professional anglers, Guido and Dion Hibdon to help promote their products. Both have been on the B.A.S.S. tournament trail for years and realize the importance of

having a cover-up that securely holds your bait to your rod and to keep the bait from tangling up other rods when stored in your boat rod locker.

Cover-Ups are made in the USA and are made to last, constructed from a heavy-gauge UV-protected vinyl. Available in two colors and four sizes that will fit over most crankbaits and lures.

The Smoke colored cover allows you to clearly see your bait, while the Dark Charcoal hides your bait making it hard to see except at close up. With Cover-ups you'll no longer have the problem of rods and lines being tangled. Their patent-pending angled design on this crankbait or lure cover, prevents other lines from getting snagged on the corners of the lure cover, which can be a problem for other bait covers.

For more information on the Crankbait Cover-Ups go to www.coveryourcrank.com.

since they're filter feeders and not caught on a hook. Bow fishermen may put a dent in the population, but controlling them completely is a daunting task.

When in their larvae stage some of the mussels that create problems are so small they're almost invisible. When reaching maturity, they aren't much bigger as the Zebra mussel & Quagga mussel are smaller than a dime (see photo).

What can be done to keep them from contaminating other bodies of water. One is for boaters to learn to identify non-native species and take precautions to prevent their spread.

Several sportsmen's groups including the South Dakota B.A.S.S. and others hold Clean Boat Event s such as the May 21 Clean Boat Event being held at about a half-dozen ramps along the river below Gavins Point Dam. These events help to educate boaters and fishermen

about these invasive species, the damage they do and how to keep them out of our waters such as Lewis and Clark Lake.

Several of the things that can be done include:

- Remove all aquatic plants and animals that you can see f your boat, motor, trailer, and accessory equipment before leaving the boat launch.
- Discard unused live bait and aquatic animals properly. Don't release live bait into the water.
- Drain your live wells and all water from boats before leaving the boat launch.
- When ever possible, powers wash your boat and trailer and dry all of your equipment thoroughly.
- When ever possible, allow your boat to dry for at least 10 days before putting it into another body of water.

Fort Randall Birding Festival Set For May 20-22

WAGNER — The Ft. Randall Birding Festival will be held in the Wagner, Lake Andes and Pickstown area May 20-22.

The area boasts at least 322 species of birds of which 164 are breeding species. Experts say that in May there will still be many migratory birds in the area.

Two National Wildlife Refuges and a South Dakota Wildlife Production Area will be featured with field trips to all three. The Lake Andes Refuge borders the 4,616-acre Lake Andes Lake north of the Missouri River and is only 10 miles from the Karl E. Mundt National Wildlife Refuge located on the Missouri River. Red Lake is a short jaunt (six miles) south of the Lake Andes Refuge.

Birding is defined as the act of observing or identifying wild birds in their natural environment. It's an activity the whole family can enjoy together. To add to the birding field trips there will also be optional things to do such as a tour of the Corps of Engineers welcome center and Dam at Pickstown.

The weekend will start out Friday at 7 p.m. (6 p.m. registration) at the Wagner National Guard Armory with an overview of the weekend events. This will be followed by a talk on birds and birding in the Lake Andes/Fort Randall area by David Swanson from the biology department at the University of South Dakota. The evening will be capped off with a program on live raptors presented by personnel from the Black Hills Raptor Center. Four species of raptors will be included in the group of avian

ambassadors featured.

Saturday morning birders will meet at the Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge for a guided field trip led by David Swanson. In the afternoon, Ricky Olson, one of South Dakota's top birders, will lead a gull and tern identification field trip and talk. The Red Lake Wildlife Production Area and Ft Randall Dam will be visited. Saturday evening will feature a presentation and talk about bluebirds by David Jeffcoat, the South Dakota coordinator of Bluebirds Across Nebraska and South Dakota.

A whip-poor-will walk will also

take place for the night owls starting from the city park in Pickstown.

Sunday morning will start at the Karl Mundt National Wildlife Refuge for a field trip guided by USF&WS personnel. Among other things Bald Eagle viewing and nesting will be featured until noon when the festival will officially end.

Pre-registration for the festival by May 16 will help with logistics, save money and is highly recommended. To pre-register, go to the web site www.cityofwagner.org download the form and send it to the Wagner Chamber of Com-

merce. You can also request a registration form by calling the Wagner Chamber of Commerce at 605-384-3741.

Sponsors for the weekend events include: The Wagner Chamber of Commerce, the City of Wagner, City of Lake Andes, Town of Pickstown, Randall RC&D, Sioux Falls Bird Club, S.D. Ornithologists Union, Bluebirds Across NE & S.D., Fort Randall Casino, USDA-NRCS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes of S.D. Tourism, S.D. Game Fish and Parks, and Southeast S.D. Tourism.

'JetMan' Says Grand Canyon Stunt Will Have To Wait

HUALAPAI INDIAN RESERVATION, Ariz. (AP) — Swiss "JetMan" Yves Rossy was fascinated by the unique elements of the Grand Canyon — its swirling air currents, its cactus-covered cliffs and its significance to the Hualapai Tribe that calls the rugged area home.

They were among the reasons he chose the scenic wonder as the site for his first U.S. flight in a jet-propelled wing suit.

But on Friday — the day of his planned flight — an apologetic Rossy stood before a crowd of reporters not in the black jet suit but in a T-shirt and jeans to declare the stunt was called off. He said the same elements that piqued his interest in flying over the massive gorge years ago also meant the flight would be too much of a challenge without any practice runs.

"If I do a mistake and half of U.S. television (is here), it's really bad for you, for me, for everybody," he told The Associated Press. "I don't want to take the risk to present something unprofessional."

Rossy, who calls himself the JetMan, has rocketed above the English Channel and the Swiss Alps in his custom-built wing suit.

In his first U.S. flight, he planned to jump from a helicopter near Eagle Point on the Hualapai Reservation, spending eight minutes entertaining the small crowd with aerial stunts above the canyon before parachuting to the ground.

The Federal Aviation Administration gave Rossy the final approval for the stunt Friday morning, less than an hour before he was scheduled to take off. The agency said it learned of the daredevil's plan through public reports and sent him a letter late last week outlining the requirements to fly in U.S. airspace.



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